(b) The action taken by Passport authorities in issuing passports if verification reports are not received within stipulated time from police authorities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The guidelines issued to the State Governments in this regard are that police verification reports should be sent within a period of four weeks from the date of the reference from the Regional Passport Offices. However, the actual time taken in police verification differs from state to state.

(b) All Passport Officers hold regular meetings with the state level police officials to discuss and bring to their attention the cases where police verification reports are delayed. Because of the security reasons, Passports are being issued on police report overdue basis in10 Passport offices only out of the 28 Passport offices. Such Passport offices issue Passports on police report overdue basis after 35 days of making the reference to the respective police authorities. In other states Passports are issued only after police verification report is received.

Impact of communal carnage in Gujarat on India's Image

4590. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the international image of India has been badly tarnished following the continued communal carnage in Gujarat; and

(b) if so, the details of effective measures Government are contemplating to recover the lost image?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The disturbances in Gujarat have received considerable coverage in the international media. Such media coverage has ranged from balanced analysis critical comment.

(b) Government and its Missions abroad are undertaking proactive measures to project information on the efforts to restore law and order in affected areas and steps taken to provide relief in

a fair and non-discriminatory manner to the victims of this violence. Representatives of Indian Missions abroad are in contact with various opinion makers in the local Governments, Parliaments, and media to explain the facts relating to the situation, and to highlight the fact that self-corrective democratic processes are at work to prevent further violence. Various countries have articulated their awareness and understanding of the efforts made by Government in this regard.

Working children

4591. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the number of working children in the country as per 2001 Census, State-wise;

(b) whether it is provisional or final count;

(c) whether child labour is on increase; and

(d) the manner in which Government propose to eliminate the child labbur so as to enable them to enjoy their childhood?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (c) Authentic figures of child labour in the country are generated by the decennial census. According to the 1981 census, the estimated figure of working children was 13.6 million whereas the number of working children in the country was of the order of 11.28 million as per 1991 census. The 2001 census figures have not been published.

(d) Government has taken a series of steps to address the problem of child labour in the country. The National Policy on Child Labour was announced by the Government in 1987, which envisages strict enforcement of child labour related laws, convergence of ongoing development, programmes for the benefit of child labour and launching of projects in areas of high concentration of child labour. National Child Labour Projects (NCLPs) have been set up in 100 districts in the country. Under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986, employment of children is prohibited in 13 Occupations and 57 Processes listed in the schedule to the Act. The employment